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ABSTRACT

A study gathered information to assist as guidance in planning gender communication awareness programs that were appropriate to the St. Olaf (Minnesota) college campus. Subjects, 92 female and 96 male faculty, 133 female and 136 male staff, and 100 students in the sophomore, junior, and senior classes filled out questionnaires designed to provide information about various understandings, perceptions and experiences regarding gender communication. The project was initiated by the Human Relations Coordinator who had recently assumed the responsibility of the equal opportunity office. Return rate was very high--between 70-75%. First, gender communication was defined at St. Olaf as "appropriate relationships between men and women in the St. Olaf community setting." This implied that the scope of the issue was broader than sexual harassment or discrimination and included such relationships as casual, day-to-day interactions. Second, the issue included interactions of genders and did not focus only on females or identify one gender as the oppressed and the other as an oppressor. Third, since gender communication does not occur in isolated segments of the community, all units were included in the study. The study provided information that resulted in improved understanding of the climate at St. Olaf and that can be used as a basis for future decisions. The information obtained from this project should encourage other institutions to think of their campus climate for gender communication in a similar broad perspective. The student, faculty, and staff questionnaires are attached.) (RAE)

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GENDER COMMUNICATION AT THE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE: IMPROVING THE CLIMATE

Panel Presentation: Part 2 - Research Methodology

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National Women's Studies Association
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During the spring of 1986 and the following 1986-87 academic year, the St. Olaf Human Relations Coordinator, the Committee on the Status of Women and the Director of Educational Research planned a project to gather information about the gender communication climate on the St. Olaf College campus. The group developed questionnaires designed to provide information about various understandings, perceptions and experiences regarding gender communication. A version of the questionnaire was prepared for each of the three groups surveyed: faculty, staff and students. The purpose of the survey was to gather information to assist as guidance in planning gender communication awareness programs that were appropriate to the St. Olaf campus. The information has been useful in planning proactive, educational activities, e.g., a handout for freshmen, workshops and seminars.

Context for the Project

The project was initiated by the Human Relations Coordinator who had recently assumed the responsibility of the equal opportunity office through an appointment by St. Olaf's new president. The president assured her of his support for her work in this area. Before making plans for any program to increase gender communication awareness at St. Olaf, she felt it was necessary to have better information about the general campus climate than was currently available to her. Although she had worked with individual faculty, staff and students who sought her

advice and assistance about gender related issues, she had no idea about the representativeness of the experiences of those individuals. Thus, the context for the project was not the result of crisis or particular problems, but was the desire to create a higher level of understanding and awareness of an issue in which all campus members must take responsibility. As noted in the questionnaire cover letter from the president, "St. Olaf is committed to being an inclusive community which values individual worth and dignity and is committed, therefore, to the considerate and respectful communication appropriate to such a community."

The purpose and the scope of the issue provided direction for the project and made it unique among gender related research completed at other institutions. First, gender communication was defined at St. Olaf as "appropriate relationships between men and women in the St. Olaf community setting." This implied that the scope of the issue was broader than sexual harassment or discrimination and included such relationships as casual, day-to-day interactions. Second, the issue as defined at St. Olaf, included interactions of genders and did not focus only on females or identify one gender as the oppressed and the other as an oppressor. Third, since gender communication does not occur in isolated segments of the community, all units were included in the study. Thus, since it was the goal to improve gender communication in the campus wide community, the committee decided that if they were to design the best programs for that community,

the information must be obtained from both genders, not just the females, and from all segments, i.e., faculty, administrative/professional, buildings and grounds, secretarial, and food service staff and students; and would include a wide range of interactions between the genders.

Design of the Questionnaires

Three publications of the Project on the Status and Education of Women of the Association of American Colleges (AAC) were particularly useful in identifying the climate dimensions that should be pursued in the research at St. Olaf. [1] However, the AAC research staff examined the campus climate for only female faculty, administrators and graduate students. While it seemed necessary to include a wider range of groups in the St. Olaf study than those included in the AAC work, the reports provided valuable information about the common behaviors experienced by females on the nation's campuses, outside and inside the classroom. The report, "The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women," was particularly valuable in the portion of the project related to gender communication in the classroom.

As indicated earlier, a wide scope of behaviors was included in the questionnaire that ranged from overt, physical harassment to what some term as "micro-inequities," because they are so small (see attached questionnaire). Although these "micro-inequities" may seem small and insignificant in isolation, research shows that upon repetition, they can have a major

impact. Such behaviors include interruptions when speaking, greater recognition of a speaker of one gender over the other, and other ways of being overlooked and discounted.

The general questions addressed in the St. Olaf student gender communication questionnaire (see Appendix A) included the following: To what extent are professors equally encouraging of male and female students in classroom participation and equally supportive of male and female student comments? How frequently have students observed or experienced inappropriate gender related behaviors exhibited by faculty, others in authority and other students (about eight behaviors were included)? What behaviors are included in students' definition of sexual harassment? What is the response of students to inappropriate gender related behavior? To what extent are students aware of grievance procedures and the consequences of complaints? Regarding the future, do students support the College's providing gender communication workshops and do they support the inclusion of a gender communication item on the St. Olaf course evaluation form?

The general questions addressed in the faculty and staff gender communication questionnaires (see Appendices in B and C) included the following: How frequently have faculty and staff observed or experienced inappropriate gender related behavior by co-workers or colleagues and students? What behaviors are included in their definition of sexual harassment? How have they responded to inappropriate gender related behavior? What do they

perceive to be the St. Olaf climate for women faculty and staff members? How aware do male and female faculty and staff think they are about gender communication issues? Would they encourage St. Olaf to provide gender communication workshops? What differences, if any, have faculty observed between male and female student behavior in the classroom? Would faculty suggest including an item in the St. Olaf course evaluation form regarding gender communication in the classroom?

The student questionnaire was distributed through campus mail to approximately 100 students in each of the sophomore, junior and senior classes. A cover letter from the college president accompanied the questionnaires to all groups. An article about the project and the questionnaire appeared in the student newspaper a few days before the forms were distributed. The overall student return rate was 72%, a higher rate than is usually obtained by one mailing plus a follow-up.

The faculty and staff questionnaire were distributed through campus mail to those persons who had worked at St. Olaf for more than one year. The faculty form was distributed to all female faculty members, n=92, and a similar sized, random sample of male faculty, n=96. A return rate of 75% was obtained for both faculty groups with only one mailing. High return rates were also achieved from a single mailing of the staff, with 70% of the 136 males and 75% of the 133 females in the staff sample returning the questionnaire.

Use of Information

Several types of illuminating information can be gained from such a project that have a variety of uses. Listed below are a few of the several programs and offices that could gain valuable information from similar projects:

Faculty Development Programs. Areas of agreement and disagreement of male and female students regarding inequities in the classroom can be identified. Similar analyses can be made of male and female faculty perceptions of student behaviors in the classroom. Such results have implications for faculty programs regarding techniques to elicit responses from students and techniques for dealing with student-student interactions in the classroom.

Administration. Administrators responsible for evaluation of departments, courses, etc., will find student perceptions of the gender climate in the classroom valuable information in teaching evaluations. A gender communication item has been added to the standard course evaluation form at St. Olaf. It obtains information about provision of equitable learning environments for both genders in the classroom.

Student Dean's Offices. The questionnaire provides a wealth of information about student-student interactions outside the classroom around which the student dean's offices can plan appropriate programs.

Department Chairs and Key Faculty Committee Chairs. Perceptions of female faculty regarding committee assignments

can be helpful to those assigning committee responsibilities.

Career Advising. Definitions of sexual harassment and responses to inappropriate behavior can provide direction for programs regarding inappropriate behavior that might be encountered on future jobs.

Student Work Coordinator. The illuminative information gathered in the St. Olaf approach that included all segments of the college community can provide extremely valuable information about sources of possible problems in which employment groups with different definitions of inappropriate behavior find themselves working together. A special program was planned this year for buildings and grounds employees who work closely with students during the summer.

Human Relations Coordinator. The information gathered in the project is clearly rich with information that can assist in designing programs and publications for different groups. Upon analyzing our results, it is clear that very different programs must be provided for several distinct groups who currently have such different perceptions and definitions regarding gender communication issues at St. Olaf. Programs implemented this year by the coordinator included a freshman brochure, workshops, retreats, mediation group, and sexual assault resource and educational network.

Closing Comments

The gender communication project provided rich, illuminative information that resulted in improved understanding of the climate at St. Olaf and provided credible information that can be used as a basis for future decisions. Several characteristics of the project contributed to the quality of the information about the climate at St. Olaf and made it unique among research projects on gender communication. Those characteristics included the following:

- Perceptions and experiences of both males and females were gathered.
- Comparable information was gathered from all components of the campus, i.e., staff, administrators, faculty and students. This provided some of the most useful information, perhaps because there was no research literature reporting such results from other campuses.
- Information was gathered about a wide range of behaviors that ranged from overt, physical harassment to small, micro-inequities such as speech interruptions.
- A sound combination of quantitative and qualitative data was gathered. Each form of the questionnaire produced about fifteen

pages of written comments that proved extremely valuable in interpreting the quantitative data.

The valuable information obtained from this project should encourage other institutions to think of their campus climate for gender communication in a similar broad perspective. On any campus, but particularly a small residential college such as St. Olaf, gender communication is not isolated within the classroom nor within the dormitories. It includes the entire campus community, which makes all groups responsible for the climate of gender communication.

1 "The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women?" (1982), "Out of the Classroom: A Chilly Campus Climate for Women?" (1984), and "The Campus Climate Revisited: Chilly for Women Faculty, Administrators, and Graduate Students" (1986). Available from the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Appendix A

GENDER COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE - Student

Directions: For each of the following questions, please circle the number beside the answer that best applies to you.

1. What is your sex?
   1. Male
   2. Female

2. What is your class?
   1. Freshman
   2. Sophomore
   3. Junior
   4. Senior
   5. Special student

3. At St. Olaf have any of the following behaviors been directed at you from:

	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times
other students?				
a. Sexist humor or comments outside the classroom	1	2	3	4
b. Sexist humor or comments in the classroom	1	2	3	4
c. Obscene phone calls	1	2	3	4
d. Physical contact you felt was inappropriate	1	2	3	4
e. Unwanted sexual advances	1	2	3	4
f. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4
someone in authority other than faculty (e.g., administrator, staff member)?				
a. Sexist humor or comments	1	2	3	4
b. Questions about you personal life you considered inappropriate	1	2	3	4
c. Physical contact you considered inappropriate	1	2	3	4
d. Unwanted sexual advances	1	2	3	4
f. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4

4. Your professors may have used various means of encouraging student participation in class discussion, e.g. using eye contact, calling on students and asking questions. Please indicate how many of your professors exhibited the following behavior patterns in encouraging student participation.

	None	A Few	Some	Many
a. Generally more encouraging to male students	1	2	3	4
b. Generally more encouraging to female students	1	2	3	4
c. Equally encouraging to male and female students	1	2	3	4

5. Please indicate how many of your professors exhibited the following behavior patterns in responding to student comments.

a. Generally more supportive of male students' comments	1	2	3	4
b. Generally more supportive of female students' comments	1	2	3	4
c. Equally supportive of male and female students' comments	1	2	3	4

6. Listed below are some behaviors that might be exhibited by professors and directed at students. For each that you viewed as gender related, please indicate which, if any, (a) you have observed and (b) you have personally experienced.

	(a) OBSERVED OTHERS EXPERIENCING IT				(b) EXPERIENCED IT MYSELF			
	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times
a. Sexist language	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
b. Excessive flattery and praise	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
c. Excessive comments on personal appearance	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
d. Persistently emphasizing sexuality in inappropriate contexts	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
e. Body language you considered inappropriate	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
f. Eye contact with student you considered inappropriate	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
g. Physical contact you considered inappropriate	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
h. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

7. If you have been aware of inappropriate gender related behavior in or out of the classroom or in student interactions, what was your response? (Circle all that apply.)
   1. Have not been aware of inappropriate behavior
   2. Totally ignored the inappropriate behavior
   3. Talked to friends not involved
   4. Communicated in some way to the offender my displeasure with his/her behavior
   5. Talked to J.C. or Head Resident
   6. Talked to dean, counselor, or other authority
   7. Other (Please specify: _____)

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8. Do the following behaviors apply to your definition of sexual harassment?

	Yes, Definitely	Yes, Perhaps	Probably Not	Definitely Not	Don't Know
a. Subtle pressure for sexual activity	1	2	3	4	5
b. Sexually directed remarks about clothing, body, sexual activities	1	2	3	4	5
c. Demands for favors with implied threat concerning one's job, grades, letters of recommendation	1	2	3	4	5
d. Physical assault	1	2	3	4	5
e. Staring - extensive eye contact with particular person	1	2	3	4	5
f. Frequent comments on personal appearance	1	2	3	4	5
g. Repeated touching out of context	1	2	3	4	5
h. Excessive flattery and praise	1	2	3	4	5
i. Persistently emphasizing sexuality in inappropriate contexts	1	2	3	4	5
j. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	5

9. For each of the following, please circle the number on the continuum that best indicates how you would characterize the current St. Olaf climate for women faculty. (Circle "6" if you have no opinion or don't know.)

	Definitely		Somewhat		Neutral		Somewhat		Definitely			No Opinion/ Don't Know
Supportive, in general	←	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5	→	Unsupportive, in general	6
Uniform among departments	←	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5	→	Varies among departments	6
Better in recent years	←	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5	→	Worse in recent years	6
Needs more attention	←	1	—	2	—	3	—	4	—	5	→	Needs less attention	6

10. How aware are you of gender communication issues?

1. Very aware
2. Somewhat
3. A little
4. Not very/Not at all aware

11. Do you think that the Gold Form course evaluation should include an item regarding gender communication in the classroom?

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, probably
3. Don't know
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

Comments:

12. Would you encourage St. Olaf to provide a workshop for faculty, staff, and students regarding the awareness of healthy gender communication?

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, probably
3. Don't know
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

If yes, what issues would you suggest be included?

13. Other comments?

O.E.R.
February 1987

Appendix B

GENDER COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE - FACULTY

Directions: For each of the following questions, please circle the number beside the answer that best applies to you.

1. How long have you taught at St. Olaf?
   1. 1-6 years
   2. 7-15 years
   3. Over 15 years

2. What is your status?
   1. Part-time
   2. Full-time

3. What is your gender?
   1. Male
   2. Female

4. In the classes that you have taught, please indicate what difference in behavior, if any, you have observed between female and male students for each of the following: (Please base responses on the last 5 years at St. Olaf.)

	Men Much More Than Women	Men Somewhat More Than Women	About The Same	Women Somewhat More Than Men	Women Much More Than Men	N/A, Never Observed Behavior
a. Willing to volunteer responses in class	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Willing to contribute when called upon	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Willing to defend position	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Interrupting another student before response is complete	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Seeking help outside of class	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. Openness to constructive criticism	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Attempting to intimidate you as instructor	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. Have you been the subject of gender related, inappropriate treatment by students of the opposite gender?
   1. No
   2. Yes, once
   3. Yes, a few times
   4. Perhaps, not sure if inappropriate behavior were gender related.

6. Listed below are some interactions that might occur between colleagues. For those interactions that you view as gender related, please indicate which, if any, you have observed in a colleague and which, if any, you have personally experienced. (Please base responses on the last 5 years at St. Olaf.)

	Observed Others Experiencing It				Subjected To It Myself			
	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times
a. Inappropriate language	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
b. Inappropriate physical contact	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
c. Inappropriate body language	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
d. Inappropriate reference to your personal life	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
e. Sexist or disparaging comments by other faculty members	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
f. Sexist or disparaging comments by a department or division chair or administrator in authority	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
g. Exclusion of a viewpoint in groups (e.g., faculty meetings, committee meetings, faculty seminars, etc.)	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
h. Double standards in value given professional activity	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
i. Double standards in assigning committee work, class schedules, and departmental duties	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
j. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

7. What has been your response to inappropriate behavior? (Circle all that apply.)
   1. Have not been aware of inappropriate behavior
   2. Totally ignored the inappropriate behavior
   3. Communicated in some way to the offender my displeasure with his/her behavior
   4. Talked to a faculty member not involved
   5. Talked to a faculty member in authority
   6. Talked to some authority other than a faculty member
   7. Other (Specify: _____)

(Please see reverse side.)

8. Do the following behaviors apply to your definition of sexual harassment?

	Yes, Definitely	Yes, Perhaps	Probably Not	Definitely Not	Don't Know
a. Physical assault	1	2	3	4	5
b. Demands for favors with implied threat concerning one's job, grades, letters of recommendation	1	2	3	4	5
c. Unwanted sexual advances	1	2	3	4	5
d. Subtle pressure for sexual activity	1	2	3	4	5
e. Persistently emphasizing sexuality in inappropriate contexts	1	2	3	4	5
f. Repeated touching out of context	1	2	3	4	5
g. Sexually directed remarks about clothing, body, sexual activities	1	2	3	4	5
h. Staring - extensive eye contact with particular person	1	2	3	4	5
i. Excessive flattery and praise	1	2	3	4	5
j. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	5

9. To what extent are you aware of grievance procedures available at St. Olaf?

1. Very aware
2. Somewhat aware
3. A Little
4. Not very aware/Not at all

10. Please indicate to what extent you agree that the following statements reflect the situation at St. Olaf:

If one goes through grievance procedures at St. Olaf:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
a. The complaint will remain confidential	1	2	3	4	5
b. Action will be taken to assist the offender to change behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
c. A student is likely to be suspended.	1	2	3	4	5
d. A professor, administrator, or staff member is likely to be terminated.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Do you think that the Gold Form course evaluation should include an item regarding gender communication in the classroom?

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, probably
3. Don't know
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

Comments:

12. Would you encourage St. Olaf to provide a workshop for faculty, staff, and students regarding the awareness of healthy gender communication?

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, probably
3. Don't know
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

If yes, what issues would you suggest be included?

13. Other comments:

O.E.R.
September 1986

Appendix C

GENDER COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE - STAFF

Directions: For each of the following questions, please circle the number beside the answer that best applies to you.

1. How long have you worked at St. Olaf?
   1. 1-6 years
   2. 7-15 years
   3. Over 15 years

2. What is your status?
   1. Part-time
   2. Full-time

3. Which best describes your employment?
   1. Administrative/Professional
   2. Food Service support staff
   3. Buildings, grounds, maintenance support staff
   4. Secretarial, clerical, technical support staff

4. What is your gender?
   1. Male
   2. Female

5. Listed below are some interactions that might occur between co-workers or between a worker and someone in authority. For those interactions that you viewed as gender related, have you experienced or observed the following behaviors? (Please base responses on the last 5 years at St. Olaf.)

	Observed Others Experiencing It				Subjected To It Myself			
	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times	No, Never	Yes, Once	Yes, A Few Times	Yes, Several Times
a. Inappropriate language	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
b. Inappropriate physical contact	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
c. Inappropriate body language	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
d. Inappropriate reference to your personal life	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
e. Sexist, or disparaging comments by other workers	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
f. Sexist, or disparaging comments by someone in authority	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
g. Exclusion of a viewpoint in informal and formal groups and meetings	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
h. Double standards in value given professional activity	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
i. Double standards in assigning work committee responsibilities, etc.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
j. Other (Specify: _____)	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

6. Have you been the subject of gender related, inappropriate treatment by students of the opposite gender?
   1. No
   2. Yes, once
   3. Yes, a few times
   4. Perhaps, not sure if inappropriate behavior were gender related

7. Do the following behaviors apply to your definition of sexual harassment?

	Yes, Definitely	Yes, Perhaps	Probably Not	Definitely Not	Don't Know
a. Subtle pressure for sexual activity	1	2	3	4	5
b. Sexually directed remarks about clothing, body, sexual activities	1	2	3	4	5
c. Demands for favors with implied threat concerning one's job, letters of recommendation	1	2	3	4	5
d. Physical assault	1	2	3	4	5
e. Staring - extensive eye contact with particular person	1	2	3	4	5
f. Frequent comments on personal appearance	1	2	3	4	5
g. Repeated touching out of context	1	2	3	4	5
h. Excessive flattery and praise	1	2	3	4	5
i. Persistently emphasizing sexuality in inappropriate contexts	1	2	3	4	5
j. Other (Specify: _____ _____)	1	2	3	4	5

8. What has been your response to inappropriate behavior? (Circle all that apply.)
   1. Have not been aware of inappropriate behavior
   2. Totally ignored the inappropriate behavior
   3. Talked to co-workers not involved
   4. Communicated in some way to the offender my displeasure with his/her behavior
   5. Talked to supervisor (or another supervisor if your supervisor was the offender)
   6. Talked to some authority other than supervisor
   7. Other (Specify: _____)

(Please see reverse side.)

9. For each of the following, please circle the number on the continuum that best indicates how you would characterize the current St. Olaf climate for women staff members. (Circle "6" if you have no opinion or don't know.)

	Definitely		Somewhat	Neutral	Somewhat	Definitely		No Opinion/ Don't Know
Supportive, in general	‹	1	2	3	4	5	› Unsupportive, in general	6
Uniform among departments	‹	1	2	3	4	5	› Varies among departments	6
Better in recent years	‹	1	2	3	4	5	› Worse in recent years	6
Needs more attention	‹	1	2	3	4	5	› Needs less attention	6

10. How aware are you of gender communication issues?

1. Very aware
2. Somewhat
3. A little
4. Not very/Not at all aware

11. Would you encourage St. Olaf to provide a workshop for faculty, staff, and students regarding the awareness of healthy gender communication?

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, probably
3. Don't know
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

If yes, what issues would you suggest be included?

12. Other comments?

O.E.R.
February 1987